

There is no scenario on God's green Earth where it should be worth risking millions of jobs, trillions in household wealth, people's Social Security checks, veterans' benefits, and another recession, just to score a short-term, meaningless political point. That is what Republicans seem fixated on doing.

Now, there is a very simple step we can take today to guarantee the government won't default and won't shut down. Both sides can come together to vote yes on today's vote and vote to pass the continuing resolution. Just as Democrats worked in a bipartisan fashion under the Trump administration, Republicans must now step up to the plate. To do otherwise is the height of recklessness and irresponsibility.

Republicans say they don't want to see a government shutdown. They say they don't want to see our government default on our debt. Then, they should vote yes. It is plain and simple. It is very clear. There is no obfuscation here—crystal clear. Voting yes means avoiding default and avoiding a government shutdown. Voting no says: Let's risk it. Let's risk it.

By choosing to block today's resolution, Republicans are intentionally making default more likely. By blocking an extension of the debt limit, Republicans will solidify themselves for a long time as the party of default.

I cannot emphasize that this isn't just another political game. We are facing a parade of horrors that will hurt every single American in this country. And it is important to remember that today's vote will also advance a number of priorities besides just funding the government and avoiding default, as important as those are. It would provide desperately needed emergency funding for millions of people affected by natural disasters from this summer, including hurricanes, wildfires, and flooding across Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. It will provide billions to help resettle Afghan refugees who risked their lives helping our troops abroad. Both sides claim they support these priorities. So the easy answer is to vote yes later today.

Being elected to office means sometimes you have to do things to rise above partisan politics. It means we have an obligation to work together when our country faces an acute crisis. Tearing the barn down is easy. Building it up, preserving it, and keeping it standing year after year takes hard work and cooperation. And, at the end of the day, the only thing that matters in this Chamber is how its Members vote.

Rest assured, Democrats will vote today to do the right thing. The American people will be watching whether or not our Republican colleagues choose to vote in favor of preserving our full faith and credit or vote in favor of an unprecedented default.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND DELIVERING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 5305, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 137, H.R. 5305, a bill making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for providing emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

VACCINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I am glad to share that, a few minutes ago, I received a booster vaccination for COVID-19. All throughout the pandemic, I have followed the best advice from experts and especially from my own healthcare providers. It was an easy decision to receive a booster.

I am a survivor of childhood polio from before vaccines—before vaccines eradicated that disease here in our country and around the world now. So I have been a lifelong champion of vaccinations.

Mountains of evidence tell us these shots are safe, effective, and dramatically shrink the odds of severe disease or death from COVID. Like I have been saying for months, these safe and effective vaccines are the way to defend ourselves and our families from this terrible virus. They are also how we stay on offense against COVID as a country. All Americans should speak with their doctors and get vaccinated.

ECONOMY

Madam President, now, on a completely different matter, it is not unusual for a President to have a rough spell. Every administration faces a stretch of time where nothing seems to go their way. But what we are witnessing today is entirely different.

President Biden has not been dealt a bad hand by forces outside his control. This White House is not sailing through some unavoidable patch of choppy water. No, the Democrats have steered our country straight into a storm of serious crises all of their own making.

On issue after issue, Americans are hurting because of specific policy

choices that Democrats have made over the objections of people who actually knew better. Democrats did not inherit most of the painful inflation that is hammering working families. Their decisions have fueled it. Even liberal economists warned the President that runaway liberal spending could send costs soaring—soaring—for the middle class. Now working Americans are paying dearly at the grocery store, at the gas station, and practically everywhere that matters to families.

And what are Democrats doing today? Putting together yet another reckless taxing-and-spending spree behind closed doors that would make inflation even worse.

Now, President Biden did not inherit humiliation in Afghanistan either; he deliberately chose that as well. The Biden administration's own experts warned the White House that a reckless withdrawal would embolden terrorists and harm our ability to gather intelligence that keeps us safe. But the President clung to his made-up deadline, handed huge momentum to the Taliban and their terrorist friends, and broke his explicit promise to leave no American behind who wanted out. As one former Democratic Member of Congress said last week, "The way the administration executed that withdrawal last week has been an utter and abject disaster."

Democrats did not inherit this border crisis either. This security nightmare and human tragedy is yet another direct result of their own policies. President Biden and his allies spent 2 years campaigning on the concept of Big Government giveaways to people here illegally. Then they took office and began dismantling enforcement on the border. So what do they expect? Wave after wave of vulnerable people have been lured into hellish conditions by the mirage the Democrats have set up—cruelty masquerading as compassion. Untold thousands of people have simply been released into our country with what amounts to a polite invitation to show up—show up—for a hearing. Even before the Biden surge, only about half of individuals actually showed up.

One self-created crisis after another from our unified Democratic Party government. The latest additions are their confusion about how to fund the government and raise the debt ceiling. For more than 2 months now, Senate Republicans have been completely clear about how this process will play out, so let me make it abundantly clear one more time.

We will support a clean continuing resolution that will prevent a government shutdown, get disaster relief to Louisiana, help properly vetted Afghan refugees who put themselves on the line for America, and support the Iron Dome assistance for our ally Israel. We will not provide Republican votes for raising the debt limit.

As we speak, Democrats are behind closed doors, assembling a multitrillion-dollar reckless taxing-and-spending spree. There is no chance Republicans will help lift Democrats' credit limit so they can immediately steamroll through a socialist binge that will hurt families and help China.

There is no particular tradition that the minority will always vote for debt limit hikes during united government. When Republicans had unified control in the early 2000s, then-Senators Biden and Schumer voted no on a debt limit increase and made the party in power handle it on their own—exactly the situation we are in now. The roles were reversed. Bipartisanship is not a light switch—a light switch—that Democrats get to flip on when they need to borrow money and switch off when they want to spend money.

The debt suspension that expired in August covered all the debt that had been accumulated to that point. This is an argument about the future. Democrats want to use this temporary pandemic as a Trojan horse for permanent socialism. They have all but said so. And that is what millions and millions of Americans elected 50 Republican Senators to fight against.

For 10 weeks now—10 weeks—Democrats have known what kind of government funding legislation could pass the Senate and what kind would fail. Republicans are not rooting for a shutdown or debt limit breach. We have given the united Democratic government total clarity about how each can be avoided. Republicans have explained exactly what kind of continuing resolution can pass the Senate with our support.

Late last week, the House Democratic leader publicly said House Democrats are ready to swallow whatever CR the Senate can send them. So the House is ready. Senate Republicans are ready. We could have a bipartisan vote to fund the government today if not for the odd tactics of the Senate Democratic leader.

Before we vote this afternoon, I will ask consent to strike the partisan CR that is dead on arrival and instead have the Senate vote on a clean continuing resolution that could pass this Chamber easily. We will see if Washington Democrats actually want to govern or whether they want to add the prospect of a government shutdown to the list of inflation, Afghanistan, the border, and all the other national crises that are the direct results of their own decisions.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JANUARY 6

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, you remember the day—you will never for-

get it—January 6. Here we were in this Chamber in the process of certifying the electoral college votes. It was a pretty solemn occasion because this happens once every 4 years. We have documents coming from the States telling us what happened in the election of last year for President of the United States. It is our job to make sure that those reports are documented and that the ordinary process of the democracy proceeds.

This January 6 was not an ordinary day by any means. Before we set about our task here in the Senate and the House, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, held a rally, claiming that, in fact, he didn't lose the election, that he won the last election, and he alleged all sorts of fraud and misconduct on the part of Democrats and others that resulted in this faulty report that somehow or another he had lost the election.

Well, his crowd got so fired up that they decided to march on the Capitol as we were counting the electoral college ballots. I can remember it well. Vice President Pence was sitting where you were, I say to the Presiding Officer. We were going through the regular process, and it was a little after 2 o'clock in the afternoon. All of a sudden, that door opened over there, and people came in in suits I had never seen before and literally yanked the Vice President off the podium and pulled him out that door.

It was only a minute or two later that a member of the Capitol Police—the men and women who guard us and guard the visitors to this Capitol—a member of the Capitol Police stood where you are sitting and reported to us that there was a demonstration outside and that we should remain in this Chamber, in this Senate Chamber, because they were going to make it a safe room in the Capitol. At that time, I noticed staff people were being brought in and lined up along the back of the room itself.

It wasn't 10 minutes later until the same member of the Capitol Police stood up and said: Change in plans; everybody leave as quickly as possible. And we all did, filing out toward the back of the room, every Member of the Senate. Luckily, the Parliamentarian or some other office decided to grab the boxes with the electoral college votes in them to preserve this important piece of history from possible mob action.

As we were filing out of the Capitol, I couldn't help but look out the window and see the mobs coming on the Capitol, converging on the Capitol, carrying Trump signs. We went to a safe location and waited it out and later that evening resumed our activities on the floor of the Senate, counted the votes, and made it official, with the Vice President present.

It was an important part of history. You would think that would be enough of an embarrassment to President Donald Trump that he would drop his

claims that the election was stolen. He has done just the opposite. He has intensified these false, malicious claims that somehow or another the vote was rigged or stolen, whatever his term might be—a fraud on the public—despite clear evidence to the contrary.

He pointed to a number of States that he said proved his point, where he just could not have lost—Donald Trump could not have lost these States—so clearly, he argued, something happened there that was criminal or wrong, and an investigation would show it.

Well, one of those States was Arizona. Joe Biden carried Arizona by roughly 10,500 votes. Forty-five thousand Biden votes came from Maricopa County, so it was obviously crucial to his win. So the Republicans in Arizona decided they were going to zero in on Maricopa County and prove once and for all that Donald Trump didn't lose that county by 45,000 votes. Well, they went to great lengths to do it.

First, they gathered all their right-wing groups and Trump's defenders and raised \$5.7 million in donations. Then they hired a group with the unlikely name—I am looking for it here; something to do with ninjas. I am sure it will pop up. Oh, Cyber Ninjas. This group has no experience analyzing an election. Yet they turned over all the ballots from Maricopa County to them to recount.

Well, they pursued many bizarre theories, one of which I think was promulgated by the ever-reliable Rudy Giuliani that somehow or another there were bamboo fibers found in these election ballots, and those were an indication of wrongdoing and can connect the conspiracy maybe even to international sources.

The Cyber Ninjas rolled up their sleeves, pulled in the boxes of ballots, and started their count. They were determined to prove, once and for all, that the result that was announced that Biden carried the county by 45,000 votes was wrong. And they proved it. Through all their hard work and all the money that was spent, it turns out the draft report from the company, Cyber Ninjas, found that there were 99 additional votes for Joe Biden, rather than the amount presented by the 261 fewer votes for Donald Trump in Maricopa County, just the opposite of what they had predicted.

Well, you would think that President Trump would at least be quiet or maybe even acknowledge that he was wrong. Come on, you remember him. Here is what he said in a statement after the review was announced. He said the review "has uncovered significant and undeniable evidence of FRAUD! Until we know how and why this happened, our Elections will never be secure."

He just won't quit. And the problem, of course, is that so many Americans are buying it, primarily Republicans, increasing their numbers, believing his Big Lie about the election being stolen

from him. God forbid this man could lose an election. Who would ever dream of that? He can't think of the possibility. And they are joining him in the chorus, despite hard evidence that proves time and time and time again that he lost.

It was a spirited election—Joe Biden and Donald Trump—and when it was all over, the American people made their choice. They accepted the reality of change. Now it is time for Donald Trump and his followers to do the same.

I don't know if the cyber ninja turtles, or whoever they are, are going to go at it again in some other State, pick another State to do some investigation. More power to them. They are building up the majority for Joe Biden—just the opposite of what was predicted.

DEBT CEILING

Madam President, I would like to speak on another topic, if I might.

We are going to have a vote later this afternoon, and it is not an ordinary vote in the U.S. Senate. We are voting on what is called the debt ceiling.

The debt ceiling is the acknowledgment of the government's debt. It looks backward, and it says: Over a period of time since we last expanded the size of the debt, we have incurred more debt, and, therefore, we have to acknowledge the new debt ceiling in order to establish that the United States is going to pay that debt—which, of course, we want a reputation for paying just bills. And, in this situation, these were bills for debts incurred during the Trump administration.

It should be a rather routine thing. In fact, one might make the argument that the Senate and the House should not even be involved in this acknowledgement; it is simple accounting and should be announced to the American people. But for the time being, it is subject to a vote in the House and the Senate, and that is where the problems arise.

Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader from Kentucky, is hoping that the American public will not clearly understand the gravity and the importance of this vote. He has announced that he is going to boycott this vote and not a single Republican will vote to acknowledge the true debt of the United States of America.

I don't know if he will be able to keep his word and whether every Republican Senator will march blindly behind him. They did once before, under the American Rescue Plan, when Joe Biden proposed that we do the things necessary to bring this pandemic to an end and get America back on its feet. Not a single Republican would vote for it.

We promised cash payment of \$1,400 for every family in America. It was in the American Rescue Plan. The Republicans all voted against it. We passed the money, billions of dollars, so that we could actually administer the COVID vaccine across America. We had discovered the vaccines, but, of course,

there is a huge infrastructure needed to make sure that they are safely administered to the American people. That was in the American Rescue Plan, and all the Republicans voted against it.

There was also a provision in there to deal with helping businesses reopen their doors. Saturday night in Chicago, I spoke to a restaurateur who told me about problems he had faced and the debts he incurred to get back on his feet. The American Rescue Plan helped Americans. And every Republican voted against it. Not a single Republican Member in the House or the Senate would support it.

We are getting the same threats that the Republicans will walk out of the room. Resolving the debt ceiling is necessary to pay for decisions made. This is debt incurred during the Trump administration. And lest you think that this fiscally conservative Donald Trump was a good Republican when it came to debt, think again. The greatest increase in America's national debt in any 4-year period in our history, a 36-percent increase.

Let me repeat. Raising the debt ceiling has nothing to do with future spending. We are paying Donald Trump's bills. We are acknowledging what was done by the House and Senate, Republicans and Democrats—what was spent and now has to be repaid. This is about paying what we already owe, and it is also about averting an economic catastrophe.

As a candidate, Donald Trump used to brag that he was "king of debt." How about that. "King of debt" is what he says. Well, he proved it. His reckless spending as President, with America's credit card, added nearly \$8 trillion to our national debt—\$8 trillion. This is a third of the entire debt. It was incurred during the Trump administration.

And now the Republicans, his party, refuse to acknowledge that debt and the fact that we have to pay it back. He racked up all that debt in 4 years. Two trillion of that \$8 trillion in Trump debt, incidentally, was spent on tax cuts for the richest people in America. Yes, that was the Trump plan, supported by the same Republicans who today are saying they won't even cast a vote to acknowledge that they did it, and it added to the deficit.

By 2027, 83 percent of the benefits of the Trump tax cuts, supported by Senator MCCONNELL and the Republicans, will go exclusively to the top 1 percent of wage earners in America. Republican Senators passed those tax cuts all on their own through reconciliation.

I will tell you this. I didn't vote for it. No Democrats voted for it. What we are doing today is paying the piper, acknowledging that this is a legitimate debt of this country. We can change policy going forward, but since we enacted those tax cuts 4 years ago, it has added to the national debt. And we acknowledge it today, and Senator MCCONNELL and the Republicans refuse to acknowledge it.

During Trump's one term in office, the national debt increased by almost 36 percent—4 years: 36 percent. Our Republican colleagues voted to raise the Federal debt ceiling once and to suspend it twice during Donald Trump. And the Democrats stood with them because we understood that this is just basic requirement 101 of constitutional government. We shared the responsibility not because we agreed with his policies—we don't—but because we understood that defaulting on the national debt could cause real damage to America.

What would the costs of defaulting on our debt be exactly? According to some economists, we would see an estimated \$15 trillion of household wealth wiped out, 6 million jobs lost, and a 9-percent unemployment rate. Every last American would feel the pain. If it continued for any period of time, it would threaten retirement funds, Social Security checks, even job security.

Mark Zandi, a pretty well-respected economist with Moody's, warned that a default on America's debt would trigger "financial Armageddon," threatening America's status as a world reserve currency, all because the Republicans refuse to acknowledge debt they voted for and created under Republican President Donald Trump.

Even toying with the notion of default would have severe consequences. Back in 2011, House Republicans initially refused to raise the debt limit. America's credit rating was downgraded because of it. The result: higher borrowing costs and confidence in American leadership shaken globally.

We will see if every Republican will fall under the dictates of Senator MCCONNELL when it comes to defaulting on America's debt for the first time, and we will also see what the reaction to that is going to be.

This measure we are going to vote on in about 2 hours suspends the debt ceiling to avoid default by the government, and it keeps the government open, just that basic. After all that we have been through and what we are going through with the pandemic, how can the Republicans play with this deadly economic strategy?

Without a continuing resolution, the Federal Government will shut down in less than 4 days. With the Delta variant still taking 2,000 American lives a day, this is no time to shut down the Federal Government. With victims of hurricanes and floods and wildfires desperate for help, this is not the time to close the doors of the Agencies that can help them. With our economy still recovering, now is not the time to damage it, intentionally, for political reasons.

Right now, our No. 1 priority is keeping our Nation's economy on a path to recovery and helping families through a difficult time. We need to come together and fund the government. That is our fundamental responsibility. We need to pay our bills on time. We need to provide financial relief to Americans

who are battling disasters, whether they are in California or Oregon, Louisiana or Illinois, or Hawaii. And we need to grow our economy for future generations, increasing funding for childcare and healthcare and help for working families.

President Biden's Build Back Better plan is a proven investment in our economic future. It includes the largest middle-class tax cut in history.

Do you know what the Republicans call the largest middle-class tax cut in history? Socialism. Socialism. I heard Senator MCCONNELL say it: They just want to pursue socialism. The largest tax cut for working families and children in American history.

Unlike President Trump's tax giveaway to the rich, which Senator MCCONNELL voted for and doesn't want to pay for, the Build Back Better plan will have the corporations pay their fair share.

No one—this is a promise by President Biden to be held to—no one who makes \$400,000 a year or less will pay more in taxes. He has been pretty clear on that, hasn't he? So this notion that we are going through some socialist tax-and-spend scheme here just isn't true.

Seven months after he signed his tax cut into law, Donald Trump told the effervescent Sean Hannity of FOX News that: "When [the Trump tax cut] kicks in, we'll start to pay off the debt like it's water"—Donald Trump. That was a con.

Now the bills are coming due, and the Republicans are racing for the exits. It is time to stop this ruse and fraud on the American people. We need to pay our bills, act responsibly, and actually help working families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I rise this afternoon to bring further attention to the growing humanitarian and national security crisis we see at our southern border.

President Biden's and Vice President HARRIS's handling of the southern border has been as incompetent as it has been inhumane. This is not a partisan view: their own special envoy to Haiti has resigned in protest.

This administration is in denial; it is in denial about the scope of this crisis. Migrant crossings into the United States have already reached historic levels and, as I speak, thousands continue to arrive along our U.S.-Mexico border.

Since taking office, President Biden and Vice President HARRIS have

shirked responsibility for this crisis by placing blame on the historic levels of illegal crossing on everything from COVID-19 to climate change, to former President Trump. They are hoping Americans will forget that President Biden's first order of business was to repeal nearly every immigration policy of the previous administration.

The Biden administration's talking points say our borders are closed, but their actions indicate just the opposite. More than 12,000 of the Haitians who gathered under the bridge in Del Rio over the past week have been released into the country.

This is not a new policy—tens of thousands of migrants who have illegally crossed our border have been released since President Biden took office. Many were released without a court date and given nothing more than a list of ICE offices around the country, with instructions to report within 60 days.

Unsurprisingly, it was reported in July that nearly 87 percent of 50,000 individuals released without a court date fail to report as directed. This is a clear message that, if you make it to the United States, you will be allowed to stay without facing repercussions. This encourages families to make the dangerous trek north and entrust their safety to dangerous drug cartels at the risk of being murdered, assaulted, or trafficked because the reward is worth the risk.

The Haitian refugees who recently began arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border are evidence of that mindset. They believed the administration's actions, not their words. They watched as thousands were allowed to stay in the country, and they gambled that they, too, would get the same treatment; that after living nearly a decade in countries like Brazil and Chile, now is the time to come.

Nearly 9 months into the Biden Presidency, it is irrefutable that this administration's policies are fueling, are increasing the crisis both for our security and the humanity of people.

The historic levels of crossing at the southern border have not only created this humanitarian crisis and put an incredible strain on our immigration system, but have seriously compromised our national security.

In April, a few months ago, I visited the border and had the opportunity to speak with Agents of the FBI and DEA to hear firsthand how the crisis has affected their operations and the challenges it has created for them in carrying out their mission to disrupt transnational criminal organizations and apprehend major drug traffickers.

The cartels that operate in Central America are sophisticated, adaptable, and ruthless. Not only do they take advantage of individuals attempting the trek to our southern border by forcing them to pay thousands of dollars to fund their operations and subject them to abuse, rape, and murder, they use these individuals to their strategic ad-

vantage. They will send thousands of individuals across the border at the same time in an attempt to overwhelm while cartels bring drugs and guns undetected.

Just today, the DEA issued a public safety alert to warn against the alarming increase in counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl and meth that are being trafficked in the United States. Thus far this year, more than 9.5 million counterfeit pills have been seized—a rate that puts 2021 on a path to more seizures than the last 3 years combined. This is no coincidence.

The administration's decision to continue ignoring this humanitarian and national security crisis is allowing a horrible situation to get even worse. Actions always speak louder than words. The Biden administration must take immediate action to secure the border and enforce our immigration laws.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I have noticed over the past few months that my Democratic colleagues have developed a habit of explaining away the anger of the citizens of this country. There is anger, and there is frustration. And what they do is to do a little turn in the conversation and make it the cause of the citizens.

It is kind of blaming it on them instead of looking at themselves as Members of the Senate and saying, "You know, what could we do better?"

What I have seen is my colleagues on the other side of the aisle demand to know what is wrong with the American people; how could they not be on board with President Biden's so-called transformative agenda—change it all? Why won't they stand by and let us spend the country into economic oblivion while businesses fail, Main Streets see shuttered businesses, and once-safe border communities are being turned into war zones?

You see, what they are really doing is trying to force the American people to adjust and abandon their principles—things that they have long believed, the founding first principles of this country. They want them to abandon that—abandon their expectations, and then accommodate the miserable failure that is Joe Biden's first few months in office. He has been wrong about most all of it.

I honestly believe that many of the Democratic leaders have it wrong on this. The people aren't the ones who need to adjust. That burden belongs to the Democratic leadership—in the Senate, in the House, in the White House.

No matter how they try to dress it up or change it or smile, they are fast-tracking the road to socialism.

The anger bubbling to the surface didn't come from out of nowhere. Contrary to popular belief, outrage is not our natural state, no. What you are seeing is beyond buyer's remorse or even buyer's fear. It is buyer's anger, righteous anger, at what they see happening; and it is the culmination of almost a year's worth of confusion, fear, frustration at the Biden administration for how they have failed to lead—weak leadership.

You see, the American people aren't accustomed to watching their leaders intentionally—intentionally—jeopardize our security and prosperity on such a fundamental level. They are looking at all that has fallen apart and realizing that things are the way they are because President Biden and the Democratic leadership wants it to be this way. This is intentional.

On day one, President Biden halted construction of the border wall and left those crossings wide open to drug traffickers, to sex traffickers, human traffickers, and gangs—basically hung out the “y'all come, you're welcome” sign, opening that southern border.

They did this knowing that hundreds of thousands of migrants were already on their way from Mexico and Central America. One hundred fifty countries this year have crossed that border illegally, and that—the vast majority of them would pay the cartels for their passage north by serving as drug mules, as prostitutes. What is being done to women and children is really awful. It is a humanitarian crisis.

If they wanted to, Biden and the Democrats could put themselves between us and that threat. They could support strong immigration policies that protect refugees and also secure the border. It is possible, but they have refused to do it. Instead, they are funneling crowds of unvetted migrants into American communities and enabling the cartels to traffic women and children across State lines with impunity.

How dare they? How dare they traffic like they are trafficking?

Ignoring this problem isn't humanitarianism. It is not anti-racism. It is dangerous and exposes an appalling lack of wisdom on the part of the President; the Vice President, who is supposed to be the border czar; and their advisers.

This administration seems to believe that threats to our national security will evaporate if we ignore them: Just don't think about it; don't talk about it; what you are seeing, you are really not seeing.

What they are doing is creating policy in a bubble, which works well for grad seminars but fails miserably when there are lives on the line.

The Biden administration failed in Afghanistan. Now, we can argue for the next decade—and I am sure we will—about lessons learned, but here is what

the American people see: The Biden administration gave a terrorist organization the benefit of the doubt.

That is right. They trusted the words of the Taliban above the words of the commanders on the ground. The commanders on the ground warned that such an abrupt withdrawal would end in chaos and casualties.

But you know what? They wanted to be out by September 11. They wanted that date circled on the calendar. Joe Biden wanted to be the President who ended the war, but all he has done is emboldened the terrorists. And the war on terror continues. It continues. He ended nothing with the war on terror.

We came out of Afghanistan, but now the families of 13 American service-members are left to grieve, while State Department officials make absurd claims about the power of diplomacy and the Taliban's role in regional politics, all the while ignoring the allies and the partners they abandoned. They still don't know how many Americans, how many of our SIV holders, applicants, their families are left behind enemy lines.

And the people? The people in Tennessee whom I talk with when I go home every weekend—they are watching this. They are astounded, and they cannot believe what they are seeing the Democratic Party do.

There is no reason, no accountability, no incentive to trust that the self-proclaimed “adults in the room” know what is best.

Especially when it comes to the economy, Tennesseans can see a socialist agenda pulling the strings. Right now, they are staring down the barrel of a \$3.5 trillion budget that the Democrats have weaponized against personal responsibility and decentralized control. Just seeing that pricetag was bad enough, and now we are hearing the pricetag is growing.

But, now, Tennesseans know that the Democrats don't even care how much this costs nor do they care that, if all goes to plan, American businesses will carry a heavier tax burden than communist China. That is correct. The American businesses will have a higher tax burden than those in communist China. Living life as we know it will be too expensive for most of us to afford.

No serious person could stand here on the floor of the Senate and pretend to be shocked at the level of anger and frustration that we are seeing back home. I talk to people every single week who feel betrayed—betrayed—by this administration. They feel unsafe.

Many of the Tennesseans I speak to every day who voted for President Biden wish they had made another choice in the voting booth because, yes, they voted for the President, but they did not vote for this. They did not vote for the Afghanistan withdrawal and the manner we came out. They did not vote to embolden the communist Chinese. They did not vote for open borders. They did not vote for inflation that is skyrocketing, taxes—\$2 trillion

of taxes coming their way. No, they did not vote for that, and this is what makes them angry.

I hear their anger with every telephone townhall, with every conversation. I hear their frustration. They are angry at the White House officials who use the full force of the U.S. Government to cover up their mistakes and try to make it sound like it is the problem of the people, because they know they have messed up.

And the people have every right to be angry. The things we do in this Chamber don't exist in a bubble. They have real world consequences for real people who have real lives that they are living every day, and they know that they are beginning to live these lives in a more dangerous setting: crime on the streets, crime on the rise, open borders, unvetted migrants coming to their communities, COVID, measles outbreaks.

They are angry. They have “buyer's anger.” I like to say, as I talk to women: Security moms are back. They are back in full force. They are back because they don't like the crime in the streets. They want safe communities. They want their children safe. They want their children who are going to college this fall to be safe. They are upset with the Afghanistan withdrawal, with the continuation of the war on terror, and that their children are going to have to go refight this.

They are angry, and we hear their anger, and we know it is time for Members in this Chamber to stop playing politics with how much spending you can force out the door and address these problems that moms and dads and Americans across this country are faced with each and every day.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, later this evening, the Democrat-controlled Senate will hold a vote on another dead-on-arrival bill.

This time, though, it isn't just a messaging bill designed to put on a show for their far left. This is legislation that is actually critical to the stability of our government, our economy, and the livelihood of millions of public servants.

For months now, Republicans have made clear, though, we will not split the ticket when it comes to Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending spree. We will not vote to raise the debt limit just so Democrats can spend another \$3.5 trillion and add that to the American people's credit card in a purely partisan exercise.

If this was ever a secret, it was the worst kept secret in Washington, DC.

But our Democratic colleagues simply can't resist a chance to virtue signal even if it wastes valuable floor time here in the Senate.

We have seen this before. In fact, Democrats' designed-to-fail agenda practically dominated the Senate's calendar this summer. There was a bill to exploit the cause of gender pay fairness in order to line the pockets of trial lawyers. There was legislation to overhaul America's election system and hand Democrats a permanent governing majority. The latest version of this bill, which will also fail, will come up for a vote in a matter of days.

Senator SCHUMER has even forecasted votes on other bills that were so unpopular, as it turned out, that they didn't even make it to the Senate floor. There was one that would have eroded American's Second Amendment rights and another that would punish schools and hospitals that refused to comply with "woke" social norms.

Now, this isn't an agenda to better the lives of the American people or protect the country from global threats. It is pandering, pure and simple. While pandering to their radical base is the focus of the Democrat-led Senate, there are a number of threats this body should actually address. The most obvious is the need to prevent another government shutdown.

Let's not forget the Biden border crisis on our southern border. For the entirety of President Biden's term of office, Democrats have refused to acknowledge any sort of problem at all with our southern border because, apparently, they don't actually believe in borders or apparently care little about the drugs smuggled into this country that took the lives of 90,000 Americans last year alone. Even as hundreds of thousands of migrants poured across our border every month, Democrats showed no concern or didn't even acknowledge that there was a problem.

Then things came to a head. Finally, the news media began to pay attention to Del Rio. Within a matter of days, 30,000 migrants—nearly 30,000, primarily from Haiti—crossed the border and set up camp under the International Bridge in Del Rio, TX. Early statements indicated that the administration would make heavy use of title 42, which is a public health title designed to protect the American people against the spread of COVID-19. Early statements indicated the administration would make use of that public health title and expedited removal to return these individuals to their home countries. It sounded like a pretty remarkably sensible strategy.

But now that the migrant camp has been cleared, we know that is not what happened. Only about 2,000 migrants were returned to Haiti, a small percentage of the nearly 30,000 who crossed into Del Rio. Some 8,000 voluntarily returned to Mexico, but I expect many of those migrants and their families will make another attempt to reenter the United States. Another 5,000 of

that number are currently being processed by the Department of Homeland Security.

In a television appearance this weekend, Secretary Mayorkas said 10 to 12,000 migrants, the ones that were huddled under the bridge in Del Rio, TX—10 to 12,000 migrants—have been released into the United States, untested for COVID-19, unvaccinated, when, in fact, the Biden administration has said that the public health title 42 was going to be used to exclude them.

Well, those numbers are likely to grow in the coming days because, frankly, all the Biden administration was concerned about, apparently, was the bad optics of 30,000 migrants huddled under a border bridge in Del Rio, TX.

What the Biden administration did, as opposed to what they said they were going to do, is an open invitation for more migrants to illegally come to the United States. Individuals who are trying to decide whether to make the dangerous journey to our borders are reading the same headlines and watching the same TV news shows that we are, and many of them are simply calling their relatives in the United States saying: Should I still come?

And they are being given the green light because of the failure of the Biden administration to do anything to deter or to sway or to add costs to people illegally entering the United States. In so doing, the Biden administration is sending an unmistakable message to more migrants to come to the United States because, if you do, there is a good chance you will be released into the American countryside and disappear into that great American heartland. Migrants will ignore what President Biden is saying because they know what his administration is doing or, in this case, not doing, which is not securing the borders.

Unless something changes, the Haitian migration and the crisis in Del Rio that fixated the attention of the news media and all America—unless something changes from a policy perspective, this is going to happen again.

We already know that border crossings are at their highest levels in 20 years. Now the administration is apparently opening the door to even more illegal migration. And the smuggling organizations—the organized crime syndicates that profit from charging these migrants thousands of dollars to get them into the country—will continue to get rich because of the administration's unwillingness to enforce our immigration laws.

Well, Congress has a duty to take action and address this crisis before it grows even more out of control. Democrats cannot ignore the responsibility to enforce our laws and secure our borders just because it upsets part of their political base.

There are a lot of things we need to do in the Senate, and this parade of dead-on-arrival bills does nothing to move us in the right direction. Clearly,

our Democratic colleagues are finding their newfound majority—they are having a lot of trouble using this power to actually govern. They have a wide gulf between the so-called moderates of their party—what they can stomach and what the progressive leftwing demands.

They are up against the government funding deadline in just the next few days that could risk a shutdown during what is already tough economic times for many Americans because of the pandemic. They are trying to use a partisan budgetary process to pass trillions of dollars of more deficit-spending while also trying to get another trillion-dollar infrastructure bill signed into law. To top things off, they have fanned the flames of the crisis at our border, struggled to defend an indefensible, disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, and offended America's oldest ally. This is not what governing looks like.

There is no spotlight on a party like there is when you hold all the cards—when you control the White House, the House, and the Senate. The American people know who is responsible for the status quo. When the majority party all but refuses to work with the minority party, that spotlight grows even brighter.

I hope—but frankly I don't expect—that our Democrats will reevaluate the wisdom of this parade of failed bills and spend a little bit of time working with Republicans on legislation that could actually pass and make a positive difference for our country.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, in recent days, much has been said about Afghanistan. I spoke about it last time on September 15, and most of my colleagues have spoken on the very same subject. I come to speak more about it. Today, I will look at it from a very different angle. I am going to look at it from the angle that you see through the Inspector General lens.

The sudden collapse of the Afghan Government and the Afghan Army threw me right back to years of oversight work and audits conducted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. Now, the terminology "Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction" goes by the acronym SIGAR. That person goes by the name of his real name, Mr. John Sopko.

SIGAR, in its reports, pulled no punches. Report after report over the years exposed and documented grim allegations of weak security, systemic

corruption, and waste—waste of taxpayers' dollars. Those core problems were brushed aside and allowed to eat away at the foundation of our commitment. In other words, our leaders were not heeding the warnings from the Inspector General, Mr. John Sopko.

An inability to solve these problems prompted SIGAR to send warning signals. Those warning signals said our mission in Afghanistan was failing. And that is not a recent conclusion; that is things he stated over and over, over the years. This was all to the detriment of U.S. foreign policy and our national security—the fact that most of SIGAR's advice fell on deaf ears. SIGAR was like a lone wolf, howling out there in the wilderness.

As the final scene of the Afghan tragedy unfolded, as we all saw on television at the Kabul Airport, in those circumstances, President Biden cut and run. He assigned blame squarely on the Afghans' shoulders, but that is not the whole truth. Just pick up any SIGAR report; it is plain to see in those reports that something was wrong. We were the chief architect and financier for the lion's share of the construction in Afghanistan that collapsed. If we are to learn from this experience, we need to begin by looking in the mirror.

SIGAR's "lessons learned reports" clearly indicate that security against the Taliban threat was a top priority. According to SIGAR, security was never achieved. Based on repeated assessments of the army's readiness, SIGAR concluded that the Afghan Army lacked the capability to independently defend the country against internal and external threats, contrary to President Biden's hailing the capability of the Afghan military to preserve the country and defend it from the Taliban.

And without security, nation building was a nonstarter. Now we question whether or not nation building ought to be part of the policy, but it seemed to be too often.

When coupled with the systemic corruption I just mentioned—and SIGAR characterized that as an "existential threat . . . that eroded army readiness"—prospects for survival of the government and the army of Afghans doing their job were very dim.

Against advice that I have given previous administrations, the President announced the date certain for pulling out the U.S. military. And, by the way, that wasn't wise because you never tell your enemies what your plans are.

So within days, the Taliban eliminated the Afghan Army with hardly a struggle. The Taliban then seized U.S. military assets.

The Biden administration left Americans and Afghan allies behind enemy lines. Adding tragedy to the deeply flawed military exit, a U.S. drone strike killed 10 civilians.

There is clear and present urgency for accountability. Do my fellow Senators pay appropriate attention to the work of the IGs throughout govern-

ment? Maybe not often enough, but surely listening to SIGAR, not enough of us listened to him.

Afghanistan's collapse underscores the merits of SIGAR's work out of three dozen confirmed IGs. IGs do important work, and their work should be considered greatly. And the fact that we ignored SIGAR's work in Afghanistan is a tragedy, particularly when the people in the executive branch of government ignored it.

SIGAR was created to watchdog the huge sums of money pouring into Afghanistan. Mr. Sopko, the IG, did his job well. He issued aggressive, hard-hitting reports, documenting egregious waste and blatant corruption on both sides—our side and the Afghan side. Large sums of money simply disappeared.

In a recent report, SIGAR served up a classic case of waste and corruption, and he did it on a silver platter. It is symptomatic of the rot that derailed our efforts in Afghanistan.

One example involved the purchase of 20 refurbished Italian G222 medium-lift aircraft for the Afghan Air Force. They added \$549 million to the taxpayers' tab. These aircraft were needed but unsupportable and inoperable.

The squandering on this project was matched by others exposed by SIGAR, like the 64,000 square-foot surge command center that was built for \$34 million but never needed and never occupied.

The G222 aircraft was just another notch in Uncle Sam's belt of wasteful spending. Those planes were thrown in the junk heap because of crooked mismanagement—and that was on our side.

The Air Force general who led the program while on Active Duty, and then as vice president for the company selling the Italian aircraft, allegedly violated criminal conflict-of-interest statutes.

SIGAR wanted to pursue criminal charges, but the Department of Justice refused to prosecute. The Department of Justice turned a blind eye to the general's alleged misconduct. Let that sink in.

A half-billion taxpayer dollars went up in smoke, and no one was held to account. At a minimum, this reckless spending demanded disciplinary action. With little or no accountability, it was easy for crooks to line their pockets with schemes like the G222 aircraft.

Now, SIGAR exposed that. It wasn't prosecuted, but SIGAR nailed quite a few. Investigations resulted in 160 criminal convictions. Corruption was found on both sides.

The convicted included 42 Afghans, 58 U.S. military personnel, 49 U.S. contractors, and 11 U.S. Government personnel and citizens.

Some money was recovered, but obviously you don't recover all of it. However, in such a target-rich environment, I suspect that SIGAR's investigators barely scratched the surface.

Unfortunately, while SIGAR's finger was stuck in the dike, Uncle Sam kept

spending money—kept the spigot wide open. Some estimate that over \$2 trillion flowed through the pipe to a government and an army known by SIGAR to be riddled with systemic corruption. We tolerated it, and the money kept flowing.

What happened in Afghanistan boils down to the fundamental principle of good government. Oversight is critical to accountability. SIGAR has more work to do. SIGAR will need to provide a full accounting for all the captured and abandoned weapons and equipment.

You see a figure of \$85 billion of that stuff left over there for the Taliban to use for whatever they want to use it for—hopefully, never against the United States.

The IG will need to track down unexpended dollars in the pipeline, estimated at \$6½ billion or more, so those tax dollars can be returned to the Treasury or allocated for other legitimate and needed purposes.

The IG will need to investigate allegations that high officials fled with hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars in cash. And we are told that one of those was the former President. The most recent President of Afghanistan got away with millions and millions of dollars.

Now, if true, this would be more proof of systemic corruption that was the country's undoing. Stolen tax dollars should be recovered.

The House Defense authorization bill already instructs SIGAR to address these and other issues. I call on the Senate Armed Services Committee to adopt those same measures and authorize funding needed to finish the job by SIGAR.

Congress needs to know why SIGAR's alarm bells on poor security, corruption, and waste were largely ignored. They were unmistakable indicators of the impending collapse that we now know has happened to the country of Afghanistan—to the Taliban.

Once the decision was made to pull out U.S. troops in early 2020, preparations for evacuations were mandatory. So then why did our President make such a panicked and haphazard exit? Did no one see the warnings coming and the signs that showed what would happen? Did the military fail to develop an orderly exit strategy and evacuation plan, as alleged by Secretary Blinken?

If true, who is responsible for that blunder? A congressional autopsy might help us avoid the same mistakes in the future. It might help us put forward a better foot to strengthen strategic alliances.

As painful as it may be, we must never give up trying to learn from our past mistakes. We still face threats from terrorist groups with the same ideology as the 9/11 attackers have. And you know where they got their training—in Afghanistan.

We still have troops in many countries combating terrorism in partnership with local forces. We can't afford

to sweep mistakes under the rug and just move on and forget about it.

Without some soul searching, America risks further humiliation like we have just witnessed, which will only embolden our would-be adversaries.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

(The remarks of Mr. TUBERVILLE pertaining to the introduction of S. 2857 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. TUBERVILLE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND
DELIVERING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I had hoped to be standing here today making a statement in support of the bill before us. For weeks, Chairman LEAHY and I, along with chairs and ranking members of the subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee, worked cooperatively to produce a bipartisan package—a package that includes a continuing resolution to keep the government operating, as well as, two, emergency supplemental funding for disaster relief, and, three, to support those who needed rescuing following the President's hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Bipartisan support for anything is a rare commodity around here. Senator LEAHY and I know that. But we have experienced bipartisan support with each other in the past, and it works. It is something that should be embraced and, I hope, emulated.

We nearly got our work done, as appropriators so often do, but larger forces intervened. We are not by ourselves here. Leadership on the other side of the aisle intervened to pursue partisanship over comity and sabotage over constructive engagement by, I believe, unnecessarily forcing the debt limit increase into what would otherwise be a bipartisan package.

The Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, has been clear. We will not support any effort to increase the debt limit. The road to success was clearly marked; nevertheless, my Democratic colleagues chose to drive this package right into a ditch rather than embrace a bipartisan path forward.

This is not complicated. There is a simple solution. Take up and pass a bill that was negotiated on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, which has support on both sides of the aisle—a bill that, one, keeps the government open, which we all want to do; two, provides much needed disaster assistance to storm-ravaged areas of our country; and three, delivers the aid necessary to address the Afghanistan withdrawal crisis. That is S. 2789, the Shelby-McConnell bill—who is here.

If we don't take that path, I believe my colleagues on the other side of aisle owe the American people some answers here. For example, why did they—the Democrats—why did they choose to un-

dermine a bipartisan effort to provide the American people with desperately needed disaster relief? Yes. And why did they choose to ignore the immediate needs of Afghans who deserve our support? Why are they threatening to shut down the government now that we have an alternative that would avoid that outcome?

This does not have to happen. We know Thursday is the deadline. Instead of accepting victory, my Democratic colleagues, I believe, are embracing defeat and creating a new crisis that we all ought to avoid.

It is a perilous path they are putting the country on, but it still is not too late. Today is Monday. We have a few days left. The majority can reverse course and put us back on track by immediately passing the Shelby-McConnell bill. It will keep the government open and provide much needed emergency funding. This is the bill we should be considering. I urge the majority to do so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I know the speeches on the other side have gone a little longer than we expected, so I ask unanimous consent that I have time to complete my statement on the continuing resolution and national debt, which will be relatively short.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, today, the Senate will hold a vote to allow for the consideration of a temporary, stopgap measure to keep the government funded through December 3. The measure also provides \$28 billion to help States ravaged by hurricanes and wildfires, like Hurricane Ida that recently tore through both the South and the Northeast. It provides critical assistance to Afghan refugees who fled the Taliban in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Finally, it will raise the debt ceiling to December 2022, including the \$8 billion of debt that was incurred under President Trump.

Now, this shouldn't even be a close call. A government shutdown, if we had one, would needlessly cost the taxpayers billions of dollars—billions of dollars—throughout our country. It would throw hundreds of thousands of people out of work. A government default would be catastrophic. And that is all completely avoidable.

Yet, in the wake of the deadliest pandemic our country has seen in over 100 years and in the wake of natural disasters that have left a trail of death and destruction, the Republican leader and his party have decided to play a dangerous game of political brinksmanship. They have chosen—and it was a free choice on their part—to withhold their votes and prevent this bill from even being debated, threatening to shut down the U.S. Government—the U.S. Government—and have

it default on its debts for the first time in the history of our great country.

I think that is the height of irresponsibility and callousness. It is also pretty hypocritical, because who pays the price for this political brinksmanship? Not the Republican leadership careening us towards disaster but the American people. A government shutdown has serious consequences for people just trying to make ends meet—support their families, live their lives.

Important food and nutrition programs—SNAP and WIC—would dry up in a matter of days, leaving millions of Americans in the wealthiest Nation on Earth without the help they need to put food on the table.

Also, I look at our Nation's schools that are struggling to reopen after a pandemic. Assistance to those schools would be delayed.

Then we look at our public health response to the mental health and substance abuse crisis. That would be severely hampered. And we cannot forget that we have an epidemic of drug overdoses in this country happening alongside the COVID pandemic.

The Small Business Administration that provides so much assistance to our Nation's small businesses—I believe, as I said many times on this floor, that small businesses are the backbone of the American economy—would be forced to close the door.

More than half of the CDC would be furloughed just weeks after COVID deaths passed the grim toll of the 1918 pandemic in our own country and right before the start of the annual flu season.

These are just a few examples of the needless pain a government shutdown would cause.

As painful as a government shutdown would be, the consequences of defaulting on our debt for the first time, the first time in American history—that is even worse. The government of the wealthiest country in the world would not have funds to operate, meet its obligations, and pay its debts.

The last time we even toyed with such an irresponsible idea, the credit rating of the U.S. Government was downgraded for the first time in history, and, boy, that cost every American, directly or indirectly, money. It certainly hurt businesses all over our country.

If we were to default on our debt, then the women and men of the military would be handed IOUs in exchange for their bravery defending our country; Social Security checks that people earned and rely on to survive would stop; and the economy would take such a hit from which it would be hard to recover. The stock market would no doubt take a dive and then put millions of Americans' lifetime savings at risk. All of this as we are still recovering economically from the last 18 months of a global pandemic. And for what? So Republicans can make campaign commercials claiming they are the party of fiscal responsibility and do that with a straight face? Come on.

While President Trump was in office, U.S. debt increased by \$8 trillion—\$5½ trillion alone since we last raised the debt ceiling under President Trump. Incidentally, on that one, because it was so important to the country, there was bipartisan support for it.

Republicans' irresponsible tax cut for the wealthiest Americans is partly to blame, but Democrats still supported the Trump administration when it needed to raise the debt limit to account for the resulting bills because, if we did otherwise, everybody in this country was going to be hurt. It would have been irresponsible. It would have been dangerous for the U.S. economy.

The argument made by my colleagues that Republicans will not support raising the debt limit because they are not going to support the tax-and-spend policies of the Democrats—well, it is probably just as well that many people wear masks these days because it hides their smiles, because that argument does not hold water. The bills they falsely claim to be socialist bogeymen have not even passed Congress, let alone been signed into law, and they are going to be fully paid for. In 2017, my friend the Republican leader chose not to take that path when Republicans passed a massive tax cut—massive tax cut—for the wealthiest in this country, and that was not paid for.

Raising the debt limit is about meeting obligations our country has already made, and many of those obligations were made under President Trump. So playing political games with so much on the line—that is as irresponsible as it is irrational.

The bill before us today provides a path out of this made-in-Washington crisis—a path that could help all of our country. It can fund the government through December 3. It can raise the debt limit through December 2022. It could provide relief to communities all over our country that have been devastated by natural disasters and provide assistance for the brave Afghans who supported our mission through two decades of war.

So we really have an off-ramp from this crisis. I wish my colleagues would take it. Vote to advance this bill. Stave off an unnecessary crisis. Put the American people first, ahead of the party. That is actually, I think, a pretty simple choice.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators CASSIDY, KENNEDY, and I be allowed to complete our remarks prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—SHELBY-MCCONNELL AMENDMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. So, Madam President, the Democratic leader has scheduled a vote today that he knows will fail. For more than 2 months, since

July, Republicans have been clear about where we stand: We are willing to work together to keep the government open. We are not willing to help Democrats raise the debt ceiling while they write a reckless taxing-and-spending spree of historic proportions behind closed doors.

Democrats control the entire government—the Senate, the House, the White House. They intend to sideline Republicans and go it alone to slam American families with historic tax hikes and borrowing. So they will need to raise the debt limit on a partisan basis as well. And they have known that for 2 months now—2 months.

Just like then-Senator Biden and Senator SCHUMER voted no on a debt limit increase and made a unified Republican government handle it alone back in the early 2000s, this has happened before.

Earlier this year, Senate Democrats requested and won additional flexibility to make policy on party lines. They have every single tool they need to do their job.

The Democratic leader, the Speaker of the House, and the President of the United States have had 10 weeks—10—to plan for funding the government and addressing the debt limit. There never had to be one ounce of drama to any of this. Any drama here is self-created by the Democrats. Republicans continue to try to help our Democratic friends avoid multiple new crises of their own making.

On the debt limit, Democrats have all the time and all the tools to do what they have to do, and I have explained in detail how they need to proceed. Because Democrats ignored our warning back in July, they must amend their previous budget resolution with debt limit instructions and proceed through a fast-track process.

On the more urgent issue, government funding, Senator SHELBY and I have a clean CR that could pass today. Our bill tracks with bipartisan talks. It would keep the government open, fund disaster relief for Louisiana, and fund defensive assistance for our ally Israel and their Iron Dome, and it drops the debt limit language that Democrats have known is a nonstarter for more than 2 months.

The Senate could advance this bill tonight. If Democrats will let us, we could take a bipartisan step tonight toward guaranteeing there will be no government shutdown. If the Democratic leader lets us, the Senate could advance government funding legislation with a big bipartisan vote yet tonight.

The House Democratic majority leader has said they will take up whatever CR the Senate sends them. The House is ready. Senate Republicans are ready. The only holdout is the Senate Democratic leader and his partisan tactics.

So, in just a moment, I will ask consent that Democrats forget about the vote they know will fail and instead let the Senate vote on a bill that can actually pass.

It is up to the Democrats. We can either move this legislation forward tonight or we can have a show vote, which they know will fail, and inch closer toward another crisis of their own making.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise supporting my colleague's proposal.

This proposal provides disaster supplemental assistance relief for Southwest and Southeast Louisiana; it extends the National Flood Insurance Program; it funds the government; and it restores funding for Israel's Iron Dome.

We are 3 days away from a government shutdown for one reason: Democrats control Washington.

A clean vote on disaster relief and a continuing resolution to fund the government—legislation filed by Senators MCCONNELL and SHELBY—passes today with overwhelming bipartisan support. We know that. But my Democratic colleagues are holding this critical funding set not just to fund the government but funding set to benefit victims of disasters in my State and elsewhere hostage to fund their planned tax-and-spend extravaganza.

Disaster victims need disaster relief. It is 1 month since Hurricane Ida, 6 months from unprecedented ice storms, 12 months since Hurricanes Laura and Delta wreaked havoc on Southwest Louisiana. Disaster assistance is long overdue. This bill gets it done.

And while we are recovering from 2-years' worth of storms, we can't allow the National Flood Insurance Program to expire. Many policyholders, especially in Louisiana, are still recovering from hurricane damage. Government shouldn't pull the rug of insurance from beneath them. It is critical the program is extended so homeowners are covered if there is another storm. This proposal extends NFIP. It also provides disaster relief.

The proposal is good for Louisiana. It is good for the country. I urge my colleagues to support this proposal.

With that, I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I rise in support of Senator MCCONNELL's legislation.

On August 27, 2020, just 13 months ago, Hurricane Laura hit Louisiana. Forty-five days later, Hurricane Delta hit Louisiana. Nineteen days after that, Hurricane Zeta hit Louisiana. We got a little bit of a break. Four months after that, we were part of the historic winter storm, about which we have all read. And then 3 months after that, we had a historic rainfall event in Louisiana, up to 12 inches, unrelated to a hurricane. Three months after that, Hurricane Ida hit Louisiana. And 2 weeks later, Hurricane Nicholas hit Louisiana.

Every one of these storms was over 100 miles per hour sustained winds. The

wind for Hurricane Ida was clocked at its highest at 185 miles per hour. If you add up all the damages, it is about \$150 billion in 13 months.

Now, other States were impacted by these storms, but Louisiana took it full in the face. This was as brutal a blow as nature has inflicted on an American State in modern history. We will be coughing up bones for years, and this legislation is going to help us recover.

In fact, this legislation does every single thing that my colleagues Senator CASSIDY and Senator MCCONNELL talked about that my Democratic friends want to do, everything: keeps government open, maintains flood insurance, gives disaster relief not just to Louisiana but to my friends in the Northeast part of our country, to my friends on the west coast. It does help my State, Southwest, Southeast, North Louisiana, but we are not the only ones.

Senator MCCONNELL's legislation does everything except one thing, one thing: increasing the debt ceiling that Senator SCHUMER can do in a matter of days on his own.

Why are we fighting over this? You know, nature abhors a moron. It is moronic for us to be having this fight when it can be so easily solved.

Everything in Senator MCCONNELL's legislation can easily pass this body with 70 votes, and we know it. And then Senator SCHUMER can come right behind by simply amending the budget resolution, and our problems are solved. Nature abhors a moron. Let's don't be moronic.

I yield back to Senator MCCONNELL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 137, H.R. 5305. I further ask that the first amendment in order be the Shelby-McConnell amendment to the text of which is identical to Calendar No. 135, S. 2789; that there be 2 hours of debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, and upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Shelby-McConnell amendment be agreed to; finally, upon disposition of the Shelby-McConnell amendment, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, with a 60-affirmative-vote threshold required for passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I have listened to this debate. I have also listened to my two dear friends from Louisiana speak about the disaster recovery, and I support disaster recovery for that. But I would just point out that on the proposal of the Republican leader, there would be no funds in the Treasury to pay for disaster recovery or for writing a check to Israel for the Iron Dome because it doesn't raise the debt limit.

And the substitute offered by my friend, introduced by my dear friend the vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator SHELBY, does not solve the problem in front of us. It doesn't address the looming debt crisis facing our Nation, so it ignores that that exists.

Now, perhaps my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to wash their hands of this. They can. Much of that debt was incurred under a Republican President and under a Republican-controlled Senate and debt racked up by irresponsible tax cuts championed by the Republican Party for the wealthiest of Americans. And, yes, debt also occurred in a bipartisan fashion to deal with multiple crises that faced the Nation: Disaster assistance in the wake of hurricanes and wildfires keep getting worse every year because we don't combat climate change; COVID relief to keep this country from careening head first into economic disaster in the wake of a worldwide pandemic; historic levels of support and investment in our Nation's military and our men and women in uniform.

And to try to put this all at the feet of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda, a yet-unpassed reconciliation bill that is not the law—it hasn't been passed—is ridiculous. We are talking about debt we already incurred, not spending in the future.

And as my Republican colleagues know, we expect to fully pay for those investments. They may not like how we are going to offset the spending, but that is what the legislative process is for, to debate them. At least we are willing to pay for the bills we incur, which is more than could be said for the Republicans when they pushed a massive tax cut for the wealthy that was not paid for.

So let's stop this political brinksmanship. Let's secure the full faith and credit of the United States. Let's pass and increase the debt limit. To do otherwise puts our country and our economy at risk.

The substitute also scales back the assistance provided to Afghan refugees that was included in the House-passed bill.

Now, I was pleased when we reached bipartisan and bicameral agreement of \$6.3 billion in the House-passed bill for much needed assistance for the brave Afghans who supported our mission through two decades of war. It is our duty; it is our obligation to support them.

But the substitute bill they are seeking to pass would shorten the length of time we provide assistance to thousands of Afghan women and men who fled to the United States to escape the wrath of the Taliban—food, medical care, housing, basic things they need.

The bill also eliminates their right to obtain a REAL ID-compliant U.S. driver's license, yet we want them to go out and seek jobs.

How are they going to do that if they can't drive?

There shouldn't even be a debate. I could give a dozen more reasons, but I know people are ready to vote, so I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 137, H.R. 5305, a bill making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for providing emergency assistance, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Ben Ray Lujan, Patrick J. Leahy, Jack Reed, Jacky Rosen, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Angus S. King, Jr., Tammy Duckworth, Tammy Baldwin, Patty Murray, Thomas R. Carper, Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tina Smith, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Christopher Murphy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5305, a bill making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for providing emergency assistance, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 48, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 385 Leg.]

YEAS—48

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Peters
Bennet	Hirono	Reed
Blumenthal	Kaine	Rosen
Booker	Kelly	Sanders
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Gillibrand	Murray	Warren
Hassan	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Padilla	Wyden

NAYS—50

Barrasso	Cotton	Hawley
Blackburn	Cramer	Hoeven
Blunt	Crapo	Hyde-Smith
Boozman	Cruz	Inhofe
Braun	Daines	Johnson
Burr	Ernst	Kennedy
Capito	Fischer	Lankford
Cassidy	Graham	Lee
Collins	Grassley	Lummis
Cornyn	Hagerty	Marshall

McConnell	Rounds	Thune
Moran	Rubio	Tillis
Murkowski	Schumer	Toomey
Paul	Scott (FL)	Tuberville
Portman	Scott (SC)	Wicker
Risch	Shelby	Young
Romney	Sullivan	

NOT VOTING—2

Feinstein Sasse

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 48, the nays are 50.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is not agreed to.

The motion was rejected.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. I enter a motion to reconsider the failed cloture vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, I want to make sure everyone understands exactly what has happened here on the Senate floor. The Republican Party has now become the party of default, the party that says America doesn't pay its debts.

Our country is staring down the barrel of two totally Republican-manufactured disasters—a government shutdown and a first-ever default on the national debt. The impacts of both would gravely harm every single American in this country. Republicans would let the country default for the first time in history.

A few moments ago, the Senate had an opportunity to begin solving these problems right away. Democrats did their part and voted yes, but Senate Republicans meanwhile voted to drive our country straight toward a government shutdown and the first default in our country's history.

Let me be clear. What the Republicans in the Senate did tonight is not normal. This isn't your typical Washington practice, and it shouldn't be treated as such. It has far more severe consequences than the typical political cat fight. Republicans know the consequences of their obstruction. They know a default would likely create a recession. They know that middle-class families will suffer immensely. They have heard the same warnings that we have. And by many calculations, the Republican default will raise the deficit by more than the American Rescue Plan, and yet Republicans still obstructed tonight.

It is one of the most reckless, one of the most irresponsible votes I have seen take place in the Senate, and it should send a signal to every family, small business, market watcher about who in this Chamber is in favor of endangering the economic stability of our country and who isn't.

Let me repeat: The Republican Party has solidified itself as the party of default, and it will be the American people who pay the price. Social Security checks, Medicare benefits, veterans benefits, small business—all this and more are now on the chopping block because Senate Republicans are play-

ing games with the full faith and credit of the United States.

Now, despite Republican intransigence, this matter cannot be set aside for even a moment. Before the vote, I changed my vote from yes to no in order to reserve the option on additional action on the House-passed legislation.

Keeping the government open and preventing a default is vital to our country's future, and we will be taking further action to prevent this from happening this week.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 264.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert T. Anderson, of Washington, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 264, Robert T. Anderson, of Washington, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior.

Charles E. Schumer, Tammy Duckworth, Brian Schatz, Alex Padilla, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard J. Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Gary C. Peters, Mark R. Warner, Tammy Baldwin, Martin Heinrich, Mazie Hirono, Debbie Stabenow, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Thomas R. Carper, Tina Smith.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 159.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jonathan Eugene Meyer, of Ohio, to be General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 159, Jonathan Eugene Meyer, of Ohio, to be General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security.

Charles E. Schumer, Tammy Duckworth, Brian Schatz, Alex Padilla, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard J. Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Gary C. Peters, Mark R. Warner, Tammy Baldwin, Martin Heinrich, Mazie K. Hirono, Debbie Stabenow, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Thomas R. Carper, Tina Smith.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, September 27, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

TRIBUTE TO ATOMIC VETERANS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I draw attention to and recognize the immense service and commitment to our country of our Nation's Atomic Veterans. I also extend special recognition and gratitude to Idahoan and Atomic Veteran Noelan "Mac" McCormack for his service to our country and his efforts to ensure his fellow veterans receive appreciation and recognition for their service and sacrifices.

Mac McCormack of Coeur d'Alene, ID, served in the U.S. Marine Corps Test Unit #1, a unit active from 1954–1957 involved in specialized tactics, including warfare as it related to nuclear weapons. An Atomic Veteran is a veteran who, as part of his or her military service, participated in nuclear testing between 1945 and 1962, served in the U.S. military forces in or around Hiroshima and Nagasaki through mid-1946, or was held a prisoner of war in or near Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

Earlier this year, when designating July 16, 2021, as National Atomic Veterans Day, President Biden noted the considerable challenges Atomic Veterans have faced, "Atomic Veterans